



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

HYLAS

(THEOCRITUS, IDYLL XIII)

BY HERVEY ALLEN

*Where art thou, Hylas,
Of the golden locks?
Where art thou, Argive lad,
That fed thy flocks
In wind swept Thessaly,
Beside the sea?
Alas! Alas! for thee,
Hylas—Alas!*

I

When the pleiads rose no more
Rowed the heroes to the shore,
Much in fear of winter gales,
And they furled the winglike sails,
Carrying up the corded bales
From the hollow, oaken Argo
Till they lightened her of cargo.
Then they beached her for the winter
Where nor rocks nor waves could splinter.
There the heroes made their camp
By the whispering seashore damp,
But the mighty Herakles,
Tired of looking at the seas,
Rose and left those sounding beaches
For the upland's wind swept reaches.

In a little beechwood gray
Hylas fed his flock that day,
Playing all alone, but gayly,
Where he fed his lambkins daily,
Singing to a five stringed psalter
By a little woodland altar,
Where a shepherd's fire of oak
Made a ribbon scarf of smoke,
Curling highly, thinly, bluely,
From the faggots cut but newly.
Moving with a god-like ease,
Through the gray boles of the trees,

Hylas first saw Herakles,
Looming vast as huge Orion,
Tawny in his skin of lion;
While through interspace of leaves,
Through the network autumn weaves,
Fell bronze sunshine and bronze leaves
On the lion skin with its paws,
Dangling, fringed with crescent claws.

Softly all the flock were bleating
As he gave the lad good greeting,
Rubbing down with leaves the club,
Thick as thickest chariot hub—
Hylas stood with golden locks,
Glowing 'mid the lichened rocks,
Laughing in the silver beeches,
White as milk and tanned like peaches.
Then the hero loved the lad
For his beauty made him glad,
And he took him on his knees;
Tender was huge Herakles,
Telling him of strange journeys
To the far Hesperides,
Crossing oceans in a bowl,
Till he won him heart and soul.

So these two were friends, forever,
Never seen apart, together
Were they all that winter weather.
And the hero taught the youth
How to shoot and tell the truth,
How to drive a furrow straight,
Plowing, plowing very early
When the frosty grass was curly—
Taught him how to play the lyre,
Till each wire and wire and wire
Sang together like a choir.
And at night young Hylas crept
In the lion skin where he slept,
Where the lowing oxen team
Stood beneath the smoky beam,
Slept beside the hero clipt
By the giant, downy lipped.

*Centuries have fled away
Since the hero came that day
To the little beechwood gray
Where young Hylas was at play.
But I shall, as poets may,
Wreath these roses for his head,
For his beauty is not dead.*

*And a voice has sung to me,
Sung this ancient threnody,
Like a memory of the sea,
Like an autumn melody,
"Alas! Alas! for thee,
Hylas — Alas!"*

II

When the springtime came again
And the shepherd to his spen
Led his cloudy flock again,
When the awkward lambkins bounded
While the twin pipes whistling sounded,
And old Charon from his glen
Saw below the smoke of men,
Curling thinly from the trees,
Then the heroes sought the seas.
Then the Argo left the shore,
For the eager warriors thought,
When the pleiads rose once more,
Of the golden fleece they sought.

Hylas went with Herakles,
Dancing to the dancing seas,
And he stood high in the bow,
Golden by the carven prow,
Or he lay within the furls
With the sea damps on his curls.
But at home his mother wept
With her long hair on the floor,
By the hearth where he had slept,
For her woman's heart was sore;
Saying, "He is gone from me!
Gone across the sounding sea!
Ai! Ai! Woe is me!
*Alas! Alas! for thee,
Hylas — Alas!"*

With the soft south wind to follow
All the day the sail was hollow,
While the marvelous Orpheus sang,
Till the water furrows rang—
Never man sang as he sang—
Never man has sung the same—
And the ship flew till they came
Where the olive trees are gaunt
By the winding Hellespont,
And the Cian oxen wear
Water bright the bronze plowshare.

On a fallow meadow hollow,
 Where the Cian cattle wallow,
 There they landed two by two;
 They the grass and rushes strew
 For their bed,
 Leaves and pointed flag stocks callow,
 Foot and head.
 And the evening coming on
 Herakles and Telamon
 Set the supper fires upleaping
 And the shadows swooping, sweeping
 Overhead.
 Meanwhile, Hylas with a vase
 Wandered inland for a ways,
 Hoping there to fill his bronze,
 Girt about with little fawns,
 Polished.
 And around and twice around it,
 Where an inwrought girdle bound it,
 Fled the rout of chaste Diana,
 Goddess led.

Inland in a cup-shaped vale
 Willow swart and galingale
 Grew with swallow wart, and sparsley,
 Maiden hair and blooming parsley.
 And the shallow's level glass
 Mirrored back the yellow grass
 Where the swallow dipped his wings,
 Making rings on rings in rings.
 There a nymph dance was afoot
 Where the country people put
 Cloth and oaten cakes and bread
 For the water spirits dread—
 Two and two and in and out,
 Three and two, around about,
 Hands around, and then they vanished,
 Leaving Hylas there astonished.

But at last he stooped to dip
 And the eager water slipped,
 Stuttering past the metal lip,
 Choking like a sunk bell rung—
 Suddenly white nymph hands clung
 Cold as iron about his arm
 Till he cried out in alarm.
 Gave a little, silver cry
 And the swallow skimming nigh
 Darted higher in the sky,
 And the echo when he spoke—
 Awoke.

Now the white hands tighter cling,
Now the funneled water ring
Fills and flows till in its glass
Nods again the nodding grass.
Alas! Alas! for thee,
Hylas — Alas!

Then it was that Herakles,
For his Hylas ill at ease,
Left the heroes by the fire,
Strung his bowstring taut as wire,
Went to look for Hylas inland,
Past a little, rocky headland,
Rising higher ever higher.
Till he found the cup-shaped vale,
Where he called without avail,
Shouting loudly, "Hylas, Hylas,"
Echo answered back, "Alas,"
Echo answered very slowly,
Speaking sorrowfully and lowly,
When he called the lad, "Hy-las,"
Hollow echo said, "Alas."

But he never found him more
On the hill or by the shore,
On the upland, on the downland,
Never found him where he lay
Down among the boulders gray,
Limp among the watery rocks
Where the lily raised its chalice
And the dread nymphs combed his locks,
Pale Nycheia, April-eyed,
And white Eunice and Malis.
For his voice came down to these
Vague as April through the trees,
Filtered through the water clear,
Very faint but strangely near,
Very thin—
And no echo could they hear,
Only ripples' silver din
And the dull splash of an otter;
Echo cannot live in water.

*But that echo comes to me
Down through half eternity,
Crying out, "Alas! Alas!"
For all beauty that must pass
Like a picture from a glass—
When Time breathes it is not there—
Bony hands and coffined hair!
Alas! Alas! Alas!*

—HERVEY ALLEN.